



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

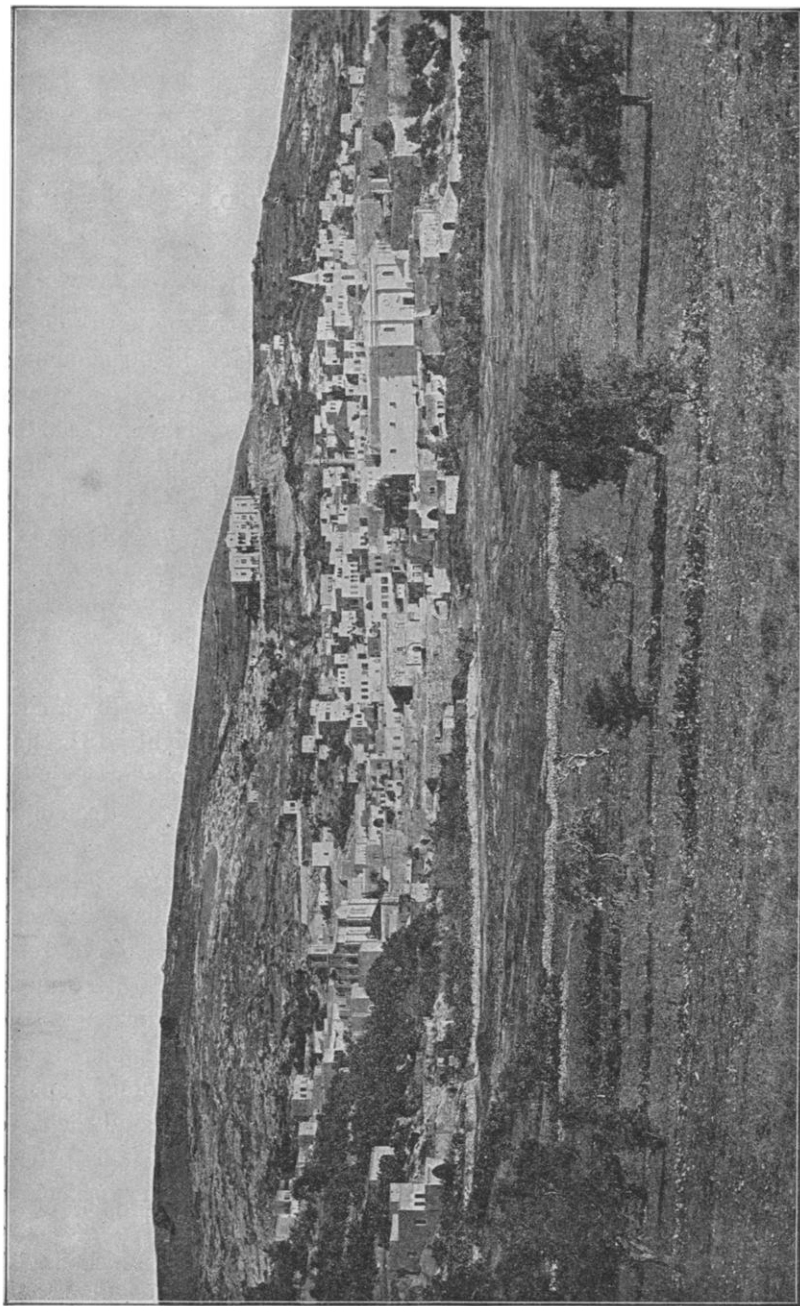
## THE FAREWELL BREAKFAST AT NAZARETH

---

REV. JOHN A. RICE, D.D., LL.D.  
New Orleans, La.

---

It was, let us say, January 10, A. D. 27, in the early morning. Nazareth nestled then, as now, at the foot of Lebanon, on the edge of a beautiful basin a mile long by three-quarters wide, surrounded on three sides by hills and the mountain on the fourth. The streets were dark except for the dim lights that shone through the cracks of the houses where they had burned all night, and everything was silent except for the footfalls of the watchman, who still kept his lonely vigils along the narrow streets. A little while and the door of Joseph's house opened and all were astir within. The street was so narrow that one could almost touch both sides at the same time by standing in the middle and reaching out both arms, and the house stood very near the street, in line with those on each side, separated from them by only a narrow strip of land and connected with them by a continuous roadway over the roofs, along which one might go through the town without setting foot on the ground. The house was almost a cube, about fifteen feet square at the base and twelve feet high. The structure was very simple; four posts were set in the ground, and the space between them wattled in with wooden strips, leaving an opening in front, three by six feet, for the door; this latticework was all daubed with clay, and the whole whitewashed. The roof, made in the same way, slanted slightly, so as to let the water run off behind. Here and there a sort of green moss had grown over the walls, and the rain had caused the clay to melt and run in spots, so as to stain the white and make the building present a rather dingy appearance. On the right side a stairway led to the roof, around the edge of which a balustrade three feet high prevented from falling those who went up there to meditate, pray, rest, and watch the crowd below. There were no windows, and the door was the only opening. The shutter was made of split wood, hung on wooden hinges, locked with a wooden bar on the inside; a wooden key, ten inches long, with



NAZARETH

some little pegs in the end made to fit corresponding holes in the bar when introduced through the keyhole in the right side, would displace like pegs, release the bar, and open the door. There was no front yard. Back of the house there was a small garden, in which herbs, onions, and lentils were grown; and in the corner a luxuriant fig tree afforded delightful shade. There was no well, for Mary brought the water from the spring northeast of the town, where a perennial stream still gurgles from the rock.

The family now began to prepare the morning meal. They had all slept together on pallets placed around the oven in the center of the room, so as to bring their feet to the warmth that lingered there from the evening fire. Their covering had been their outer garments. Mary rolled these mattresses together, put the bundle in the left back corner of the room, and covered it with a white towel. The oven, made of burnt clay, was three feet deep, two feet in diameter at the top, and three at the bottom, round, sunk into the ground till only a few inches remained in sight. There was a large opening at one side on the top, over which a stone had been placed the night before to keep the heat in.

In the right back corner a small closet held the few clothes of the family. On a shelf six feet high, to the right of the door on the inside, the cooking utensils were carefully arranged—a couple of saucepans, a kettle, two or three pots, a skillet—all made of whitened copper; several earthen bowls, two large wooden spoons, and three or four smaller ones; a large meat knife; two or three shallow drinking cups, six inches in diameter. Along the whole length of the left end of the house ran a raised platform on which Mary kept her jars of fruit, barley, wheat, flour, salt, olive oil, honey, cheese, raisins, and fresh meats when she had any. Lying up among these was an object that one might have taken for a tanned goat without the head and feet; it was the wineskin. Farther toward the front were the wash-tub, turned bottom up, the mortar and pestle for spices, two or three handle baskets, the oblong bread tray, a couple of rolling-pins (three feet long and three-quarters of an inch in diameter), a round board for rolling out cakes, a large whitened copper waiter, a candlestick (three feet high, made of clay), and in the corner the tool-chest. The mill, consisting of two round stones, two feet three inches in diameter

and not very thick, made to fit together, the bottom convex, the top concave on the under side, and an iron pin in the center holding them together, was stationary on the floor near the back left-hand corner. The upper stone was turned by a short iron pin fitted into a socket on top and held in the hand. The grain was poured into the hole in the center of the top stone, and there were at the side two small earthen jars to catch the meal. The broom, a simple bundle of grass, leaned up behind the door. On a tiny shelf on the front wall to the left was the mirror—a small piece of polished metal—a long comb thick in the middle, a few other toilet articles, needle cushions, etc., and a roll of dressed sheepskin nearly a foot long wound round a turned handle and badly worn—the family Bible. Near the door to the left were the water-jar, a ewer, a towel hanging on a peg. Some bunches of dried fruit were suspended from the ceiling, or rather the plaster overhead. At the right of the door the sandals of all the family and Mary's shoes (quite like our ladies' shoes worn in rough weather) were placed along the wall on the floor. A polished wooden case, three-quarters of an inch square and six inches long, was attached to the doorpost. It contained slips of sheepskin, on which Deuteronomy 6:4-9; 11:13-21 were written in twenty-two lines. All this was visible in the faint light of the tiny little lamp still burning on the bushel turned bottom up near the center of the house, for it could in the dawn give light to all that were in the house. It was a tiny candlestick, so to speak, with the wick on one side, and the wee bit of a boat-shaped bowl large enough to hold a spoonful of olive oil mixed with water. Beside it was a small vessel—like the lamp, of clay—large enough to hold a supply of oil sufficient to replenish the light at intervals.

Some things were notably absent. There were no pictures on the walls, for art was tabooed in Israel; there were no chairs, none of the modern comforts and conveniences, none of those things that fill our homes with an atmosphere of brightness and good cheer. And yet that atmosphere was there, born not of outer furnishings but of inner faith and faithfulness. So was it in all the typical homes throughout Judaism.

On that January morning Mary took some grass that Simon had gathered among the wild flowers and other shrubbery the day before,

and, with some dried camel's dung picked up on the streets, kindled a fire in the oven, and let it heat while she mixed the barley loaves and put them in a shallow open pot. Meanwhile, as it was to be an extra breakfast, Jude had been sent out for a small piece of mutton which Mary cut up into pieces the size of a walnut, and put them on a skewer a foot long, and set it with the loaves in the large oven. She cooked some eggs and brought out some loaves of wheat bread that had been dried rather than cooked, ten inches by six, and an eighth of an inch thick. The barley loaves looked like the southern pones of cornbread, only smaller. Breakfast being ready, Mary took it up, put the stone over the mouth of the oven, got the small oval table, eighteen inches high and three feet long, set it over the oven, and spread a heavy tablecloth large enough to come to the floor all round, keeping the heat in and catching the scraps at the same time. On this she set the wooden bowl of bread, another of meat, and still another of eggs. There was but one drinking-cup which was used by all for the water, it being filled separately for each by Mary, who kept the waterpot near her place.

While all this was being done, Jesus was arranging the tools so that those not to be used immediately would not be ruined by the rust; for the moths among the clothes that were packed away, the thieves that could so easily break through the thin walls, and the rust on the tools kept in these close houses were the three relentless enemies of the Palestinian household. What must have been his thoughts when for the last time he put away instruments that had so long been his companions? Did he think of them as the engineer thinks of his engine? Did he in spirit bid them an affectionate farewell?

Everything was now ready. What a contrast with our table furniture. No knives and forks, no plates, no cups and saucers, no silver spoons (none of any kind), no dishes, covered or otherwise, no coffee-pot, no flowers on the table (for roses at least were scarce in that climate). There were no chairs; rugs around the table kept them off the bare floor made of clay and small pebbles pounded together and mixed with lime.

They sat down with their feet under them; they would have reclined at any other meal but breakfast. Each with bowed head said a short grace, and then Jesus pronounced the regular blessing, to

which all said, "Amen;" after which Jesus took the bread, broke it, and, placing a bit of meat on a piece, handed it to Mary, then one to James, who sat at his left, and to Jude, Simon, and Joses, and they began to eat with their fingers. The wide, flat cup was dipped into the wooden bowl of goat's buttermilk, and they drank of this one at a time.

This group of five brothers, with their mother, like the table around which they sat, contrasted sharply with a modern breakfast scene in the western world. The center of the group was easily distinguished from the rest. His hair was cropped and parted in the middle, his whiskers rather long; the only garments he then had on were the two gowns—the outer and the inner—and a girdle tied loosely about the waist. The outer garment of blue linen reached almost to his feet when standing, the sleeves coming to the wrists and flowing. It was really a bag, cut rather square, with one end open and a hole for the head in the other, with loose sleeves attached. At each of the four corners four or five threads hung down three fingers' lengths—really long tassels, white and blue alternately—forming the hem of his garment destined to figure in his after history. This fringe was to remind the Jews of the law, very much as we might tie a string around the finger to remind us of an article we are to purchase down the street. The inner garment seemed to be a light shade of red, as well as it could be seen when he moved. The girdle was a sash going round the waist several times. It was about three inches wide and of the same material and color as the outer garment. The brothers were dressed very much as he was except that their clothes were not so full and long—particularly the sleeves—and the undergarment was of white linen. Mary's dress was like these brothers' except that it was much looser and fuller. Her hair was long and it was done up in the back in a sort of ball. Something of a halo pervaded the whole circle. A deeply serious spirit rested upon all; Mary did not eat much; the very movements of her lips betrayed an inward conflict. She had since Joseph's death leaned on Him who was recognized far and wide as "the Carpenter"; and now He had told her that His Father's business called Him to a wider field of labor. What it all meant she did not know, but it took Him from her.

There was but little talking that morning; the Jews, though not the

least morose, were quiet at the table, where their whole normal life came out. The more formal of them would not talk at all. Their whole life and civilization were organized around religion; the moral value of details was one phase of their message to the world. With them nothing was ethically insignificant. The smallest item of etiquette violated was not as with us impolite; it was immoral. In Israel every home was to be a sanctuary and every table an altar. The only things, strangely enough, that were not religious were marriages and funerals. Jesus did not adhere to popular standards of manners any more than of morals, for some of his most valuable discourses were simple table talks. But the silence that prevailed for a while that morning was like that which comes to us all at the breaking of the home ties—a silence that reaches back for all the sacred places where our feet have wandered and all the hallowed shrines at which our hearts have worshiped; a silence that will in after years call us to rest amid the rush and roar, the clash and the clamor of contending world-forces; that will be as fresh as the morning dews and as sweet as a morning smile in the gloaming of many an evening of sorrow. Jesus broke the monotony by turning attention to some practical matters. The chest they were to deliver to the ruler of the synagogue the next week had not been finished; they must put on the trimmings and meet their contract promptly. He had agreed to make several articles of furniture for prominent people in the town and to build two new houses for men who were moving, the one from Rome, the other from Corinth, closing the contracts for them as he had always done. They must be careful and faithful, and there would be no lack of work and no want of means to provide the necessities of life. There was reassurance in his voice that gave great comfort to Mary. There was a compass in it that evinced largeness of soul life; there was a depth that told of his grasp of abysmal, eternal truths, a purity of tone that revealed transparency of spirit, and a melody that made his very heart-throbs musical; there was a strength in it that betrayed the touch at least of omnipotence and the decisiveness of destiny, and a quietness that attested infinite resources of reserved power; there was a richness in it that bore a message of sweetness and light to the dull ears of those who were about him. The conversation soon turned to lighter matters, and Jesus wondered



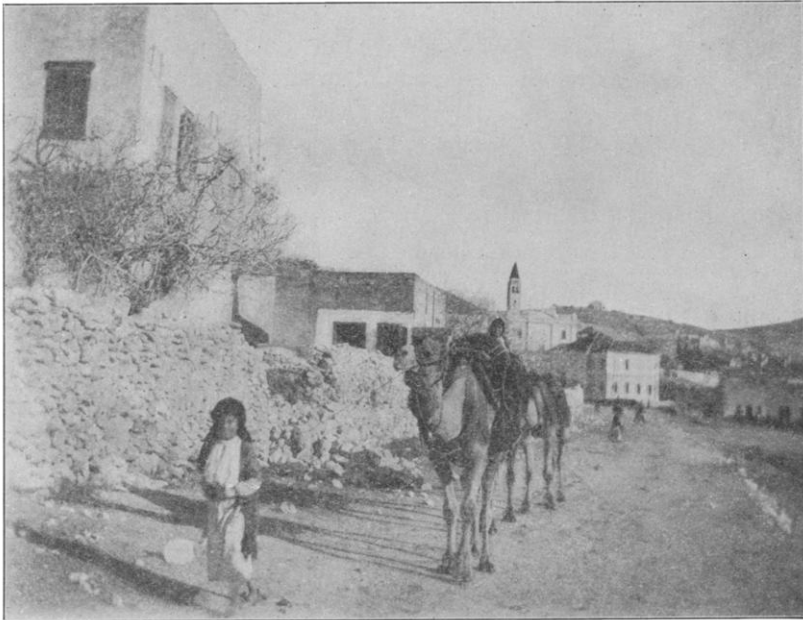
if the sisters were coming over to see him off. Scarcely had he asked the question when the prattle of children was heard on the street. There they were—the two married daughters and their little ones. “Peace be with you,” was the cordial greeting, and “With you be peace,” the fervent reply. Breakfast over, they were ready for the thanksgiving. Jesus threw the turban over his head; all rose and stood with bowed heads, while he led the prayer, after which they all said “Amen,” and turned to wash their hands, Mary pouring the water out of a pitcher on their hands over the basin.

The youngest daughter had brought back in her bosom a half-peck of meal she had borrowed, tucking up her skirts so as to make a pocket large enough to have carried much more. Their dress was quite like Mary’s; the color of the elder’s was a deeper blue, for death had stolen a loved one and she was in mourning. They both were veiled with short thin veils, around the edges of which a string of jewels or pieces of silver were carefully strung, the largest at the bottom and the sizes decreasing toward the top. There were probably ten or a dozen of these, and they constituted the special property of the wife which not even the husband could ever own or control—the heirloom prized above all other trinkets. Losing one of them was like losing a wedding-ring. Jesus gave himself up for a little while to the children, who gathered around him; and while he was talking to them the elder daughter complained to her mother that some people had stopped on the street to admire the baby, and had looked at it in such a way as to make her fear they had put a spell on it. And they had blue eyes, too! She had always feared the evil eye, and now it seemed that her little darling was to be a victim. The baby itself was a queer-looking object to us moderns. You could see only the head and feet, for the swaddling clothes (a long band three inches wide) were wrapped closely around it in surgeon’s fashion from shoulder to ankle, so as to allow not even room for the arms and legs to move. When it was born it had been salted down in these strips of cloth, and the time to take them off had not yet come. Mary rebuked the superstition of her credulous daughter tenderly but firmly, regretting to see her disturbed by such old-woman’s fables. While Jesus was getting ready for the journey, the brothers-in-law came in, and the family circle was complete. He tightened his girdle

(for it was worn loose in the house), tied on his sandals (which were nothing more than thick wooden soles, with strings to come over the instep), wound the white turban around his head three or four times, fastened it under the chin with a cord, and threw the ends over the shoulder, got his scrip (a sort of leather grip, containing some linen and other articles needed for a long journey) and his stick, and was ready to go. He bade each one, "Peace be with you," and kissed them on the cheek. That farewell, like all national adieus, summed up for the Jews the crystallized expression of that which they most felt the need of; for the Jew's ideal happiness was the man who could sit under his own vine and fig tree, at peace with all the world, with none to molest or make him afraid. This was due to the fact that they were only a few clans, always surrounded by enemies, and always in danger of losing life, liberty, or property. They therefore knew no deeper need than peace, and could ask for no greater blessing upon loved ones from whom they were to part.

The last to whom Jesus gave the parting kiss was Mary. She fell on his bosom, her head resting on his shoulder. A silence fell upon all except for the words he whispered to his mother, unheard by other ears. Then for a moment she put both hands on his shoulders and their eyes met in fond communion. It was only a moment; but in that look she gathered up all the sweet words that lay scattered over thirty years of love and care, all the sweet songs sung at eventide in the lullabies of long ago, all the earnest counsel and noble instruction that had filled so many otherwise vacant hours, all the poetry that had trembled on her lips or been smothered in her heart these decades, all the treasured wisdom of fifty years of lofty thinking and faithful living, all the pathos and power with which her soul in storm and calm alike had clung to its idol, all the confidence of a mother's trustfulness, and all the anxiety of a mother's tender love. Another minute and he was on the street, followed by "Peace be with you" from little lips just learning to lisp his name. They watched him from the door; he met a woman riding an ass, with a servant at her left side prodding the animal to make it go, but did not speak. She pulled her veil over her mouth as they met, so as to conceal all the face but the eyes. One or two others were passing to and fro on camels, and he had to step aside when they met; for there were

no roads like ours, and no wheeled vehicles in use but chariots, so that the best highways were only footpaths. It was a lovely day; the birds were beginning to sing in the mulberry and palm trees; a thrush on a limb, high up over the path, seemed to breathe its sweetest notes in the last farewell to a long-cherished friend; the tinkling of bells on the far-away hillsides announced that the shepherds had taken up their lonely vigils and the flocks and herds were seeking their daily bread. The group at Mary's door saw him turn the hilltop southeast of the town and start along the footpath for Bethabara, where John was baptizing, twenty-five miles away. Mary turned to put away the fragments from the breakfast, that nothing be lost; and then, leaving the rest to go about their various duties, she went to the housetop—her only quiet retreat—and talked it all over with God.



A STREET IN NAZARETH